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CDC Health Update

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Foodborne outbreaks of cyclosporiasis in Texas and Illinois, February 2004

Investigations continue, but no evidence for ongoing transmission

Background

Public health officials at the local, state, and federal levels continue to investigate clusters of cases of *Cyclospora cayetanensis* infection (cyclosporiasis) associated with events held in Texas and Illinois in February 2004. Approximately 95 cases of cyclosporiasis have been identified among attendees of the events (36 laboratory-confirmed cases and 59 clinically defined or probable cases). Analysis of epidemiologic data continues, and trace-back investigations of potentially involved food items have been initiated by the Food and Drug Administration, see FDA press release, May 21, 2004 (<http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/NEW01071.html>).

It is not yet known whether the same item(s) caused the outbreaks in Texas and Illinois and whether these outbreaks are linked. Most importantly, despite heightened surveillance for cases of cyclosporiasis throughout the United States during the last few months, no clusters of cases besides those in Texas and Illinois have been identified. This could suggest that transmission of infection from the food item(s) that caused these outbreaks may no longer be occurring.

Texas

Two clusters of cases have been identified, which were associated with meals eaten on February 6 and 7 at a restaurant in Irving (near Dallas). CDC was first notified of the outbreak on February 27 and confirmed the diagnosis of *Cyclospora* infection in the index case-patient's stool specimen on March 4.

Illinois

Several clusters of cases associated with events held in DuPage County on February 24, 25, and 26 have been identified. The same caterer prepared the food served at all of the events. CDC was first notified of the outbreak on March 26 and confirmed the diagnosis of *Cyclospora* infection on April 5.

Perspective

The foodborne outbreaks of cyclosporiasis previously investigated in the United States have been linked to various types of fresh produce, such as basil, raspberries, and mesclun lettuce (also known as spring mix or baby greens). For the outbreaks for which trace-back investigations to determine the source of the implicated produce were conducted, the produce either definitely was or could have been imported. As always, fresh produce should be thoroughly washed before it is eaten. Because *Cyclospora* can adhere to food items, washing produce should reduce, but may not eliminate, the risk for infection.

The types of fresh produce served at the events in Texas and Illinois included basil and mesclun lettuce. However, investigations are ongoing to determine what food item(s) was associated with illness, where it was grown and distributed, and whether the outbreaks in the two states are related. The investigations have been complicated by the facts that many of the food items served at the events included multiple types of fresh produce, and certain types of produce were included in multiple food items.

Although no evidence suggestive of ongoing transmission has been reported to CDC, health-care providers evaluating persons with symptoms consistent with cyclosporiasis (see below) should request that stool specimens be tested for this parasite. Stool examined for ova and parasites usually is not examined for *Cyclospora* unless such testing is specifically requested.

Modes of Transmission, Incubation Period, and Symptoms

Cyclospora is spread by persons ingesting something (e.g., water or food) that was contaminated with infected stool. *Cyclospora* needs time (days or weeks) after being excreted in stool, into the environment, to become infectious. Therefore, it is unlikely that *Cyclospora* is passed directly from one person to another. It also is unlikely that an infected food handler, who prepares food eaten within a few days, could cause a foodborne outbreak of cyclosporiasis.

The incubation period between becoming infected and developing symptoms averages 1 week. This long interval leads to delays in detection of cases and outbreaks. *Cyclospora* infects the small intestine and typically causes watery diarrhea, with frequent, sometimes explosive, bowel movements. Other symptoms can include loss of appetite, substantial loss of weight, bloating, increased flatus, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, low-grade fever, and fatigue. If untreated, illness may last for a few days to a month or longer, with a remitting-relapsing course.

Treatment

Trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (TMP/SMX) has been shown in a placebo-controlled trial to be effective treatment of *Cyclospora* infection. Adults should receive TMP 160 mg plus SMX 800 mg (one double-strength tablet) orally, twice a day for 7 days. Some patients may benefit from longer courses of therapy. Alternative treatments for persons allergic to sulfa drugs have not yet been identified.

Further information on Cyclosporiasis can be found at:

- CDC Division of Parasitic Diseases:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cyclospora/default.htm>

DHEC Contact Information for Reportable Diseases and Reporting Requirements

Reporting of cases is consistent with South Carolina Law requiring the reporting of diseases and conditions to your state or local public health department. (State Law # 44-29-10 and Regulation # 61-20) as per the DHEC 2004 List of Reportable Conditions available at:
<http://www.scdhec.net/hs/diseasecont/disease.htm>.

Federal HIPAA legislation allows disclosure of protected health information, without consent of the individual, to public health authorities to collect and receive such information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. (HIPAA 45 CFR §164.512)

Cases of cyclosporiasis unrelated to foreign travel may be associated with a new outbreak. Health-care providers and laboratory staff should report suspect and confirmed cases of cyclosporiasis to their local and state health departments. State health departments should report cases to CDC (770) 488-7775 / 7319 / 7772.

For more information about cyclosporiasis, see:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cyclospora/default.htm>

District Public Health Offices

Mail or call reports to the District Epidemiology/Disease Reports office in each district.

Appalachia I

(Anderson, Oconee)
220 McGee Road
Anderson, SC 29625
Phone: (864) 231-1966
Fax: (864) 260-5623
Nights / Weekends: 1-866-298-4442

Appalachia II

(Greenville, Pickens)
PO Box 2507
200 University Ridge
Greenville, SC 29602-2507
Phone: (864) 282-4139
Fax: (864) 282-4373
Nights / Weekends: (864) 460-5355 or
1-800-993-1186

Appalachia III

(Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union)
PO Box 4217
151 E. Wood Street
Spartanburg, SC 29305-4217
Phone: (864) 596-2227 ext. 210
Fax: (864) 596-3443
Nights / Weekends: (864) 809-3825

Catawba

(Chester, Lancaster, York)
PO Box 817
1833 Pageland Highway
Lancaster, SC 29721
Phone: (803) 283-3175
Fax: (803) 283-0572
Nights / Weekends: 1-866-867-3886 or
1-888-739-0748

Edisto Savannah

(Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell)
1680 Richland Avenue, W. Suite 40
Aiken, SC 29801
Phone: (803) 642-1618
Fax: (803) 642-1619
Nights / Weekends: (803) 827-8668 or
1-800-614-1519

Edisto Savannah

(Bamberg, Calhoun, Orangeburg)
PO Box 1126
1550 Carolina Avenue
Orangeburg, SC 29116
Phone: (803) 533-7199
Fax: (803) 536-9118
Nights / Weekends: (803) 954-8513

Low Country

(Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper)
1407 King Street
Beaufort, SC 29902
Phone: (843) 525-7603
Fax: (843) 525-7621
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-712-6586

Palmetto

(Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Richland)
2000 Hampton Street
Columbia, SC 29204
Phone: (803) 576-2749
Fax: (803) 576-2993
Nights / Weekends: (803) 304-4252

Pee Dee

(Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon,
Florence, Marlboro, Marion)
145 E. Cheves Street
Florence, SC 29506
Phone: (843) 661-4830
Fax: (843) 661-4859
Nights / Weekends: (843) 660-8145

Trident

(Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester)
4050 Bridge View Drive, Suite 600
N. Charleston, SC 29405
Phone: (843) 746-3832
Fax: (843) 746-3851
Nights / Weekends: (843) 219-8470

Upper Savannah

(Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood,
Laurens, McCormick, Saluda)
PO Box 3227
1736 S. Main Street
Greenwood, SC 29646
Phone: 1-888-218-5475
Fax: (864) 942-3690
Nights / Weekends: 1-800-420-1915

Waccamaw

(Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg)
2830 Oak Street
Conway, SC 29526-4560
Phone: (843) 365-3126
Fax: (843) 365-3153
Nights / Weekends: (843) 381-6710

Wateree

(Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Sumter)
PO Box 1628
105 North Magnolia Street
Sumter, SC 29150
Phone: (803) 773-5511
Fax: (803) 773-6366
Nights / Weekends: 1-877-831-4647

Bureau of Disease Control

Acute Disease Epidemiology Division
1751 Calhoun Street
Box 101106
Columbia, SC
Phone: (803) 898-0861
Fax: (803) 898-0897
Nights / Weekends: 1-888-847-0902

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Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.